# 10

p r e c e d e n t   a n a l y s i s

[a]

Designing & programming for appropriation

Selected precedents were analysed to inform an appropriate programmatic and design approach to the site that addresses and embraces the varied complexities of the site and its current users. Although there is a myriad of architectural and programmatic precedents around the world that address the issue of homelessness, vulnerable people and public-social integration, the following precedents were chosen through the following lenses extracted from the theoretical framework in Essay One:

1. User appropriation and agency
(Coelho 2015, Hill 2003, Awan,
Schneider & Till 2011)
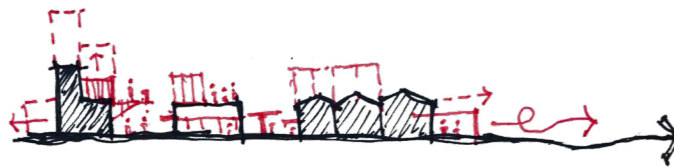
2. Evolving and transient space
(Anderson 2015, Da Costa & van Rensburg 2008)

3. [Communal] Event-driven spaces
(Da Costa & van Rensburg 2008)

Showcasing various examples of project types and programmes, each precedent stems from a social or communal well-being agenda. The programmatic responses to user needs have been considered while the precedents have been compared to each other in terms of scale, permanence/temporality, user agency and approach to the ongoing process of appropriation. For the purpose of this study, only the most important principles and conclusions from each precedent are shown, serving as insight into the overall principles deduced from the exercise.

A-Kamp 47

10.1. Photograph of A-Kamp47 vertical camp in use (Malka n.d.).

Architect/Designer: Stephane Malka
Date: 2013
Location: Marseilles, France
Programme: Temporary emergency shelter, "vertical camp" (Malka n.d.)
**User:** Street homeless people

As a form of activism, Malka designed an "installation" of 23 protruding tent pods attached to a steel scaffolding frame, fixed temporarily to a railway viaduct wall. The project aims to provide temporary, "quick-to-install" emergency shelter for street homeless wanderers to address their immediate need in the cold, as well as to offer a visual statement to spark debate around the housing crisis and a critique on the tendency of architecture to respond to homelessness with "long and very expensive answers" (Medina 2013).

The flexible "vertical camp" is positioned in an interstitial space of legal ambiguity, challenging the private property of the adjacent cultural centre, but qualifying as public space due to its vertical parasitic attachment on the public wall (Brownstone 2013, Malka n.d.).

The quick, modular and simple construction of the mobile tent and scaffolding creates a temporal, flexible, lightweight activation of interstitial space, symbolising the nomadic lifestyle of the homeless and adding to the constantly evolving public space.

Main lessons learnt:

This project shows how the temporality and adaptability of materiality can serve a symbolic purpose to catalyse public awareness, and expose the transience of homelessness. Although it is only a temporary solution, it advocates for addressing an immediate basic need first, before engaging long-term responses. In reality, the tents were mostly occupied by young travellers as a novelty, emphasising the limit of control an architect has over the way spaces are inevitably appropriated by users.
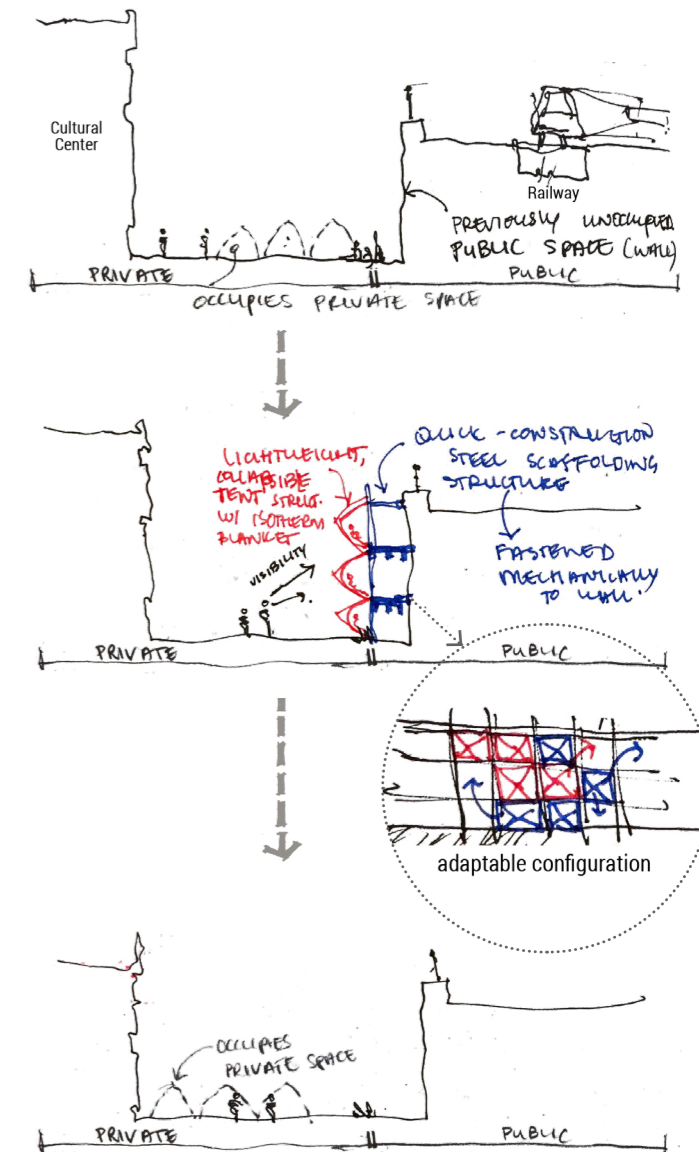
10.2. Temporary occupation of interstitial space (Author 2021).

10.3. Transient, evolving space due to quick assembly and disassembly (Author 2021).

Passage 56

10.4. Photograph of Passage 56 entrance (AAA n.d.).

Architect / Designer: Atelier d'Architecture Autogeréé (AAA)
Date: 2006–2009
Location: Paris, France
**Programme:** Communal garden and event space
User (and participants): Local community including student interns from eco-construction organisation etc.

In collaboration with various local participants, Atelier d'Architecture Auogeréé designed an incremental, semi-permanent space to activate a disused passageway (Awan et al. 2011: 106). With user appropriation as the catalyst and by embracing the transience of this process, they envisioned the project to "eventually evolve with the future users of the site" (AAA n.d.), creating materially and functionally temporal, adaptable structures and spaces from recycled materials. The space is also programmed around an anchoring communal event/activity – the communal garden – yet allows for multiple and variable everyday uses as a social-gathering and event space.

Viewing their role as "curators and enablers", AAA designed the spaces so as to leave enough room for the inhabitants to take over responsibility and agency (Awan et al. 2011: 105,106). The site continues to evolve with use, constant adaptations and additions by the community. The semi-permanent, lightweight and tectonic construction of the structures and mobility of smaller "modules" lend itself to the flexible appropriation thereof.

Main lessons learnt:

This precedent gives a clear direction for a way to design for and with appropriation through a flexible, incremental approach. The space is anchored by a daily, communal activity/programme but leaves enough room to allow multiple programmes to emerge. The material and design approach are centred on flexibility and adaptability, using lightweight, temporal materials that can be changed, disassembled and reconfigured. The temporal insertion is also sensitive to adjacent existing buildings.
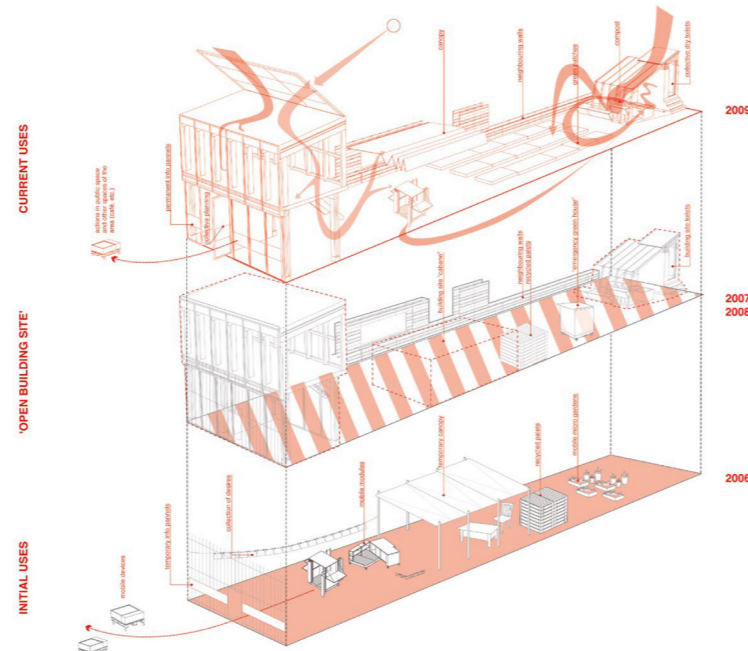
10.5. Evolution of the site over time from initial appropriation to current uses (Petcou and Petrescu 2013: 1).
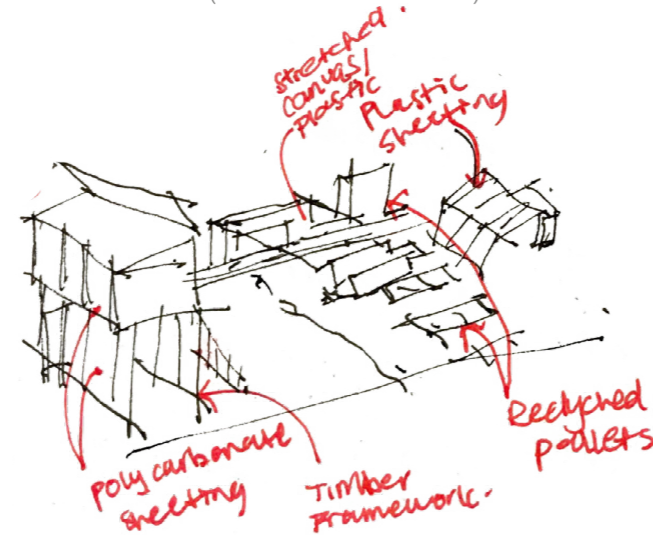
10.6. Temporal, recycled materiality (Author 2021).
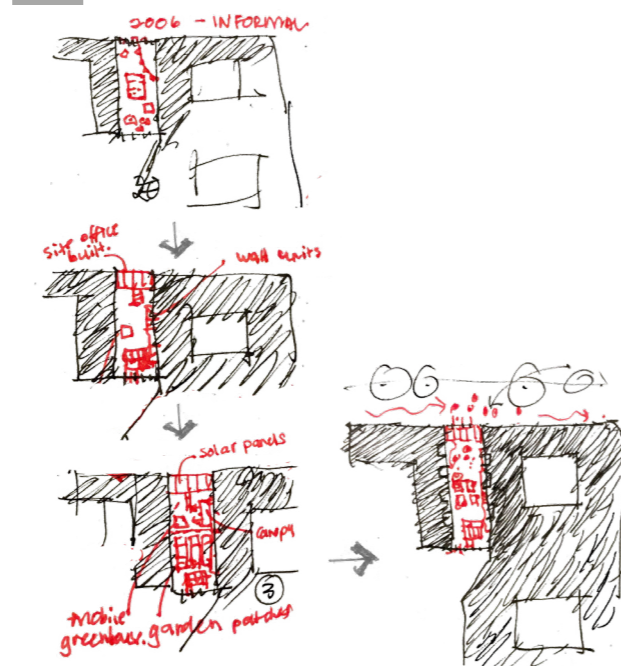
10.7. Evolution of site with use and appropriation (Author 2021).

St. Joseph Rebuild Center

10.8. Photo of St. Joseph Rebuild Centre (Farbstein et al. 2009).

Architect/Designer: Wayne Troyer Architects and Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC)
**Date:** 2007
Location: New Orleans, USA
Programme: Day Center for homeless
**User (and participants):** homeless persons

After Hurricane Katrina, the architects designed a semi-permanent multi-use facility to address immediate and social support needs of the chronically homeless, those made homeless by the hurricane and homeless immigrant workers in the area (Fabstein et al. 2009: 89-91). The aim of the centre is to provide multiple support services in one location (rudebruneraward.org 2009). The programme is driven by the varied needs of the homeless users, and the design approach is in turn driven by the programme and the need for rapid construction. Additionally, the possibility of future disassembly led to a temporal, adaptable design that touches the site lightly. Six mobile prefabricated trailers containing service intensive functions (HVAC, plumbing, etc.) are connected with a series of raised decks, benches, interstitial timber buildings and a unifying floating roof structure (Wayne Troyer Architects 2008). Due to the modularity of the trailers, the ability to easily disassemble the adjacent structures, and the independence from the roof structure, the process of reconfiguration, addition and removal of the plan is made possible. Therefore, the notion of flexibility and temporality also informs the materiality and mechanical fixings of the centre (Fabstein et al. 2009: 101-102).

Main lessons learnt:

In terms of the design approach, temporality and transience are expressed through the adaptability of the design. Flexibility is expressed in the materiality and assembly (standard elements, lightweight materials, mechanical fixing) and in modularity (trailer units). In terms of programme, the various needs of the homeless users are addressed by a multi-use support service programme, serving the basic immediate needs of food and hygiene, and longer-term psychosocial and physical needs.
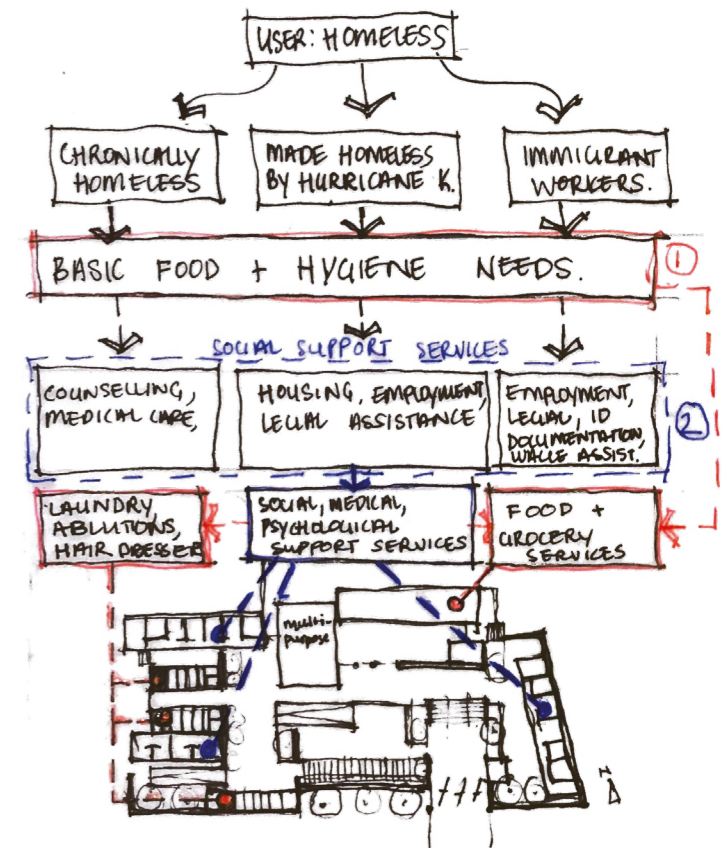
10.9. Programme informed by users' basic and support needs (Author 2021).
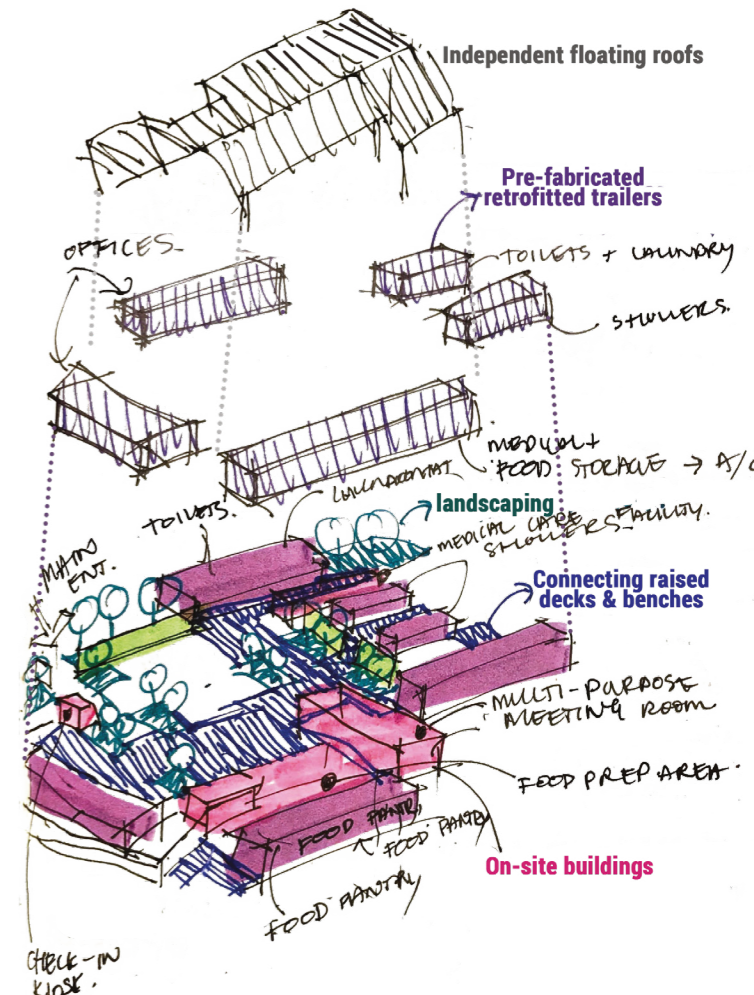
10.10. The flexible design is made up of various adaptable elements (Author 2021).

Elangeni Green Zone

10.11. Google Earth (2021) photograph of Elangeni Green Zone.

Architect/Designer: Users of the COVID-19 homeless shelter
Date: 2020
**Location:** Durban, South Africa
Programme: Self-organised urban farm
**User (and participants):** Homeless persons & local community

This project was studied as a case study of user appropriation and self-organisation with certain general lessons to be learnt towards conceptualisation, rather than as an architectural precedent. Elangeni Green Zone is an urban farm initiated by a number of homeless occupants of a temporary COVID-19 homeless shelter, adjacent to the Durban Jewish Centre in North Beach. The urban farm grew from a small informal food garden to a large "formal" farm with continuous appropriation and cultivation by the group of homeless men, causing the vacant plot to be activated and evolve over time. The "farmers" first used the food to merely sustain themselves, but eventually began selling the produce to visitors from the local community. Now, the farm supplies produce to the users' families, the shelter and soup kitchen, a local supermarket and the local community at a weekly on-site farmers market. Informal trade of fresh produce and food products have begun to emerge on the edges of the site. Thus, the project catalysed numerous activities and has gradually assisted in the integration of the shelter occupants into the local community (Duma 2020).

Main lessons learnt:

One can interpret from this scenario that when basic needs of the homeless (basic amenities, shelter, food and social support) are met, they are able to take ownership of their own pathways to independence. This case also shows that appropriation and social inclusion is a gradual and incremental process, which often happens naturally when users are able to take ownership. The lack of architectural intervention in this project also shows that an intervention does not always need to take place first, but instead can build on existing activities and appropriation as part of the incremental process.
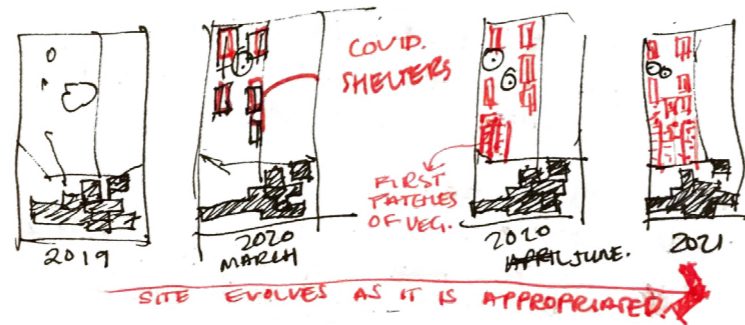
10.12. Evolution of the site as it is appropriated (Author 2021).
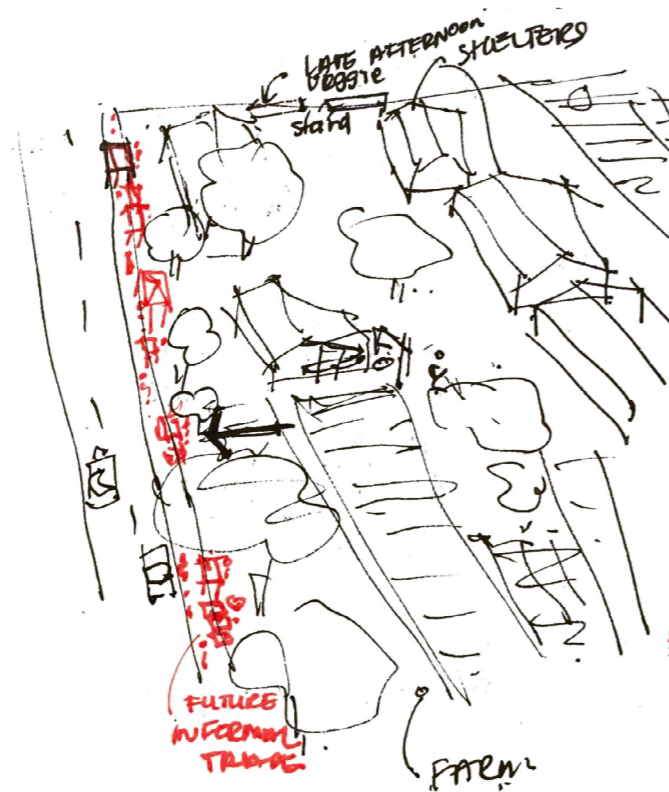
10.13. Future appropriation and activation of edges (Author 2021).
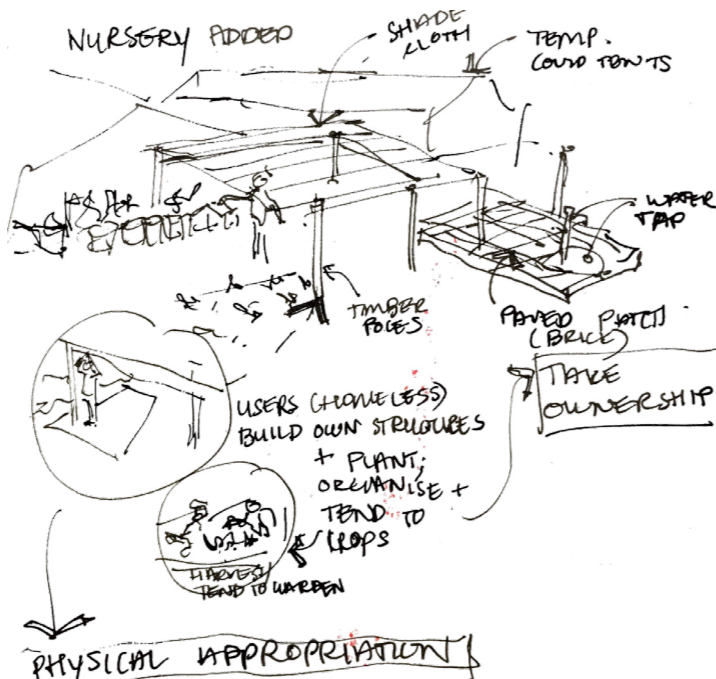
10.14. Temporary nursery structure added by users (Author 2021).

Conclusions towards a conceptual approach

Flexible, adaptable and incremental design:

From these precedents, it is concluded that a flexible, adaptable and incremental design approach seems most appropriate in celebrating and building on the ongoing, gradual process of appropriation, which affords spatial agency to the inhabitants of the spaces (Awan et al. 2011).

This approach to design allows users to take ownership of place-making, adding and changing the spaces over time to suit their changing needs (Awan et al. 2011: 58, Nakib 2010).

*"In addressing the realities of the changing needs and desires of users, spatial agency tends towards **multi-use spaces**, structures that are **adaptable**, and projects that privilege the **passage of time**."*
(Awan et al. 2011: 58)

Expression of adaptability:

Following these precedents, and according to Nakib (2010), adaptability is expressed through multi-functional spaces; mobility (including lightweight, demountable materiality and assembly); modularity, which allows easy reconfiguration and addition; integration into surroundings; and phased intervention to meet changing needs and uses. The temporal materiality and assembly in the precedents serve a functional purpose of adaptability and appropriation but can also be used to reference the transient nature of a nomadic lifestyle and informal structures such as the "tuckshops" on site.

This flexible, temporal and adaptable approach also has the potential to engage with existing buildings sensitively.

### A mixed, incremental event-driven programme:

An incremental programme embraces and builds on the transient incrementality of user appropriation and has the potential to meet a multiplicity of uses and changing needs (Awan et al. 2011). Through this approach, space becomes informed by everyday activities/events that further catalyse new emerging uses. Moreover, when an everyday activity is used to anchor a programme, it stimulates future appropriation and emergence of new activities (Petcou & Petrescu 2013). Da Costa and van Rensburg (2008) suggest an event-anchored strategy that builds on and intensifies existing activities in the context.

Additionally, a mixed and multi-use programme provides a platform for social integration of various user groups, while addressing multiple immediate and long-term needs of the focus group of vulnerable people.

In each of the precedents dealing with the homeless, there is an approach of addressing the immediate quotidian needs as a first step, then providing various support services to enable the users to take ownership of their own independence and well-being. This multi-scalar, needs-driven approach to programme provides a sensitivity to the complexities of homelessness.
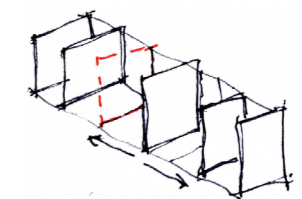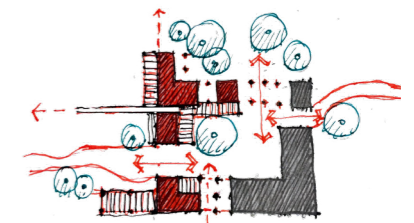
MOBILITY
(demountable, recyclable)
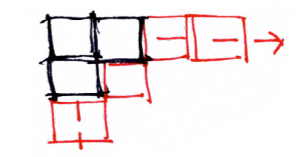
MODULARITY
(adaptable, repeatable)
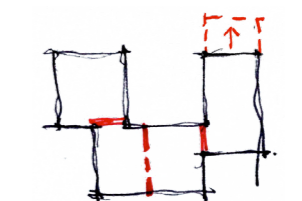
DIVISIBILITY / ELASTICITY
(adaptable)

INTEGRATED
(permeability, accessibility)

10.15. Principles of adaptability according to Nakib (2010). Diagrams by Author (2020), Honours 2020 Q4.